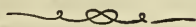


# THE AMERICAN QUESTION.



A SPEECH DELIVERED AT A PUBLIC MEETING, AT  
BURNLEY, IN REPLY TO MESSRS. DENNISON AND  
SINCLAIR.

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WE have no ill-feeling towards the Northern States, nor have we any lack of appreciation for what is good in their character and institutions. We rejoice in their schools and colleges, and in their efforts to promote the cause of temperance and virtue.

And we have no desire for the extension or perpetuation of chattel slavery. It has been said that any Englishman who can favour American slavery ought to hide his head in shame. But no such Englishman has made his appearance here. On the matter of slavery we are all agreed, and nothing further need be said on the subject.

Nor need much be said about Mr. Lincoln's honesty. Mr. Lincoln may be as honest as Mr. Dennison represents him, and yet be a very dangerous man. George the Third was an honest man, yet he acted very unwisely towards the American colonies. After driving them by his folly to secede, he waged a foolish and cruel war for their subjugation. He was a very honest man, yet he wasted a thousand millions of pounds, and sacrificed scores of thousands of lives, to prevent the people of France from remodelling their Government, and managing their own affairs. He was very honest and even very pious, yet he extinguished the liberties of his own people, gagged the press, forbade political meetings, made it a crime to lend a book or to sell a newspaper, and came near converting the constitutional Government of England into an intolerable despotism. He was very honest, yet his conduct was so very mischievous, that his friends, to save the credit of his honesty, were obliged to pronounce him an idiot or a madman. And so with regard to Abraham Lincoln. He may be very honest, but he has driven a third of his countrymen into secession. He may be very honest, but he has silenced newspapers,

*Price One Penny.*

sent innocent men and women to prison, and suspended, if not annihilated, the liberties of his country. He may be very honest, but he has wasted an enormous amount of wealth, and shed a fearful amount of blood, and has thus far accomplished no good object thereby. He has even exceeded George the Third in wastefulness and bloodshed. He has spent as much money, and shed as much blood in two years, as George the Third contrived to do in twenty. If he should carry on his war as long as George the Third carried on his, he will have contracted a national debt ten times as large as George the Third contracted, and made his country the most frightful desolation on the face of the earth. Lincoln may be very honest, but he is no statesman, no philosopher, no general. He may be very honest, but his intellect is of such a cast as to render him a greater curse to his country and the world than the most unprincipled profligate would be likely to be.

Mr. Dennison assures us that Mr. Sinclair's facts may be relied upon. Of course, anybody's *facts* may be relied upon; but the question is, Can Mr. Sinclair's *statements* be relied on? We shall show that they can not.

Mr. Dennison says that on his return to America he will be able to inform his countrymen that the cry of the Lancashire operatives is, "Give the black men freedom, and we ask no more." He is much mistaken. The operatives of Lancashire *do* ask for more. They ask that freedom shall be given to the blacks in *the best and safest way*. There are remedies that are worse than the diseases they are meant to cure; and we have a right to demand, and we do demand, that remedies of that description shall no longer be persisted in. We have a right to ask that, when slavery is abolished, it shall be abolished in such a way as to render its abolition as much of a blessing, and as little of a curse as possible, both to the slaves and to others. To abolish it in violation of law, and by hostile forces, and especially to abolish it by a servile insurrection, would be to cause a hundredfold more misery even to the negroes themselves, than slavery itself has ever caused, besides entailing unspeakable miseries on others.

Mr. Dennison says that Mr. Lincoln wishes to restore the Union for the purpose of abolishing slavery. But under the Union the Constitution gives him no power to abolish slavery.

He told you that none were to address the meeting but those who took his side of the question. Yet they call it a public meeting, and wish their resolution to go forth to the public as the decision of the people of Burnley. No one must address the meeting but those who agree with them. So you are to be called together as a jury, but be allowed to hear only one side of the question, lest you should return an unsatisfactory verdict.

Mr. Sinclair says he never entered the South, because he could not go there without getting hung, unless he put a padlock on his mouth. We *did* go into the South, and we neither put a padlock on our mouth, nor got hung. We talked as freely with slaveholders and their friends as we do with you, and they listened to us with as much respect. And we discussed with them the question of slavery with all freedom, declaring our conviction that the abolition of slavery was inevitable. If we had gone to their plantations and advised the negroes to revolt or run away, they would have sent us about our business; and they would have done right. Slavery will have to be abolished by the action, not of the slaves, but of the ruling classes. To incite the slaves to insurrection would be a crime against both blacks and whites. Your manufacturers will listen to a man who counsels them to do justice to their workpeople; but if he were to go into their mills and try to seduce their men, or instigate them to mischief, they would show him the way to the door. And they would do right.

Mr. Sinclair says the people of America have a right to alter their Constitution. No one denies it. The question is whether the Republicans had a right to break it, and rob the States of their independence.

We are told that he who favours secession is an enemy to liberty. But where is the proof? We were told that Garrison was a great friend of liberty; yet he advocated secession and Southern independence for twenty years. He urged the North to secede from the South. The motto of his Paper was, "No Union with Slaveholders." He argued that the Union was the great support of slavery,—that to dissolve the Union, and leave the South to itself, would bring slavery to a speedy end. If Garrison and his party could be friends of liberty and yet favour secession, why may not we? Besides, how could the secession of the South annihilate the liberties of the North? Cannot the



North maintain its liberties without the help of the South? Then what is it worth? Did the secession of the original colonies destroy the liberty of England? You know better. Then how should the secession of the South destroy the liberty of the North?

Mr. Sinclair had a great deal to say about the difference between "We, the People," and "We, the States." Yet the difference is purely imaginary. The People and the States are one and the same. The States were free either to accept and ratify, or to reject the Constitution. Some refused to ratify or accept it for a length of time. Rhode Island did so. Others refused to accept the Constitution till certain amendments were made to it.

Mr. Sinclair says the States have no right of secession. Then why does he speak so highly of Garrison and G. Thompson and their party, who for twenty years declared secession not only to be a right, but a duty? Has one side a right to secede and not the other? But where does the Constitution forbid secession? There is a clause in the Constitution which says that all rights not expressly granted by the States to the Federal Government are reserved to the States; and when did the States give up their right to secede? When did they give the Federal Government the right to prevent secession? And even supposing that the States had no right to secede so long as they were governed, according to the Constitution, they had a right to secede when the Constitution was set aside. And the Republicans annulled the Constitution. The Abolitionists pronounced it a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, and gloried in trampling it under their feet. The Liberty party, headed by Gerrit Smith, declared the clauses in favour of the South to be null and void. And the whole Republican party declared their purpose to violate the right of the South, both by enacting Protective tariffs, and by monopolising the public lands. Under circumstances like these the South had not only a right to secede, but had no alternative but either to secede or leave itself at the mercy of its enemies.

It is said that if the Southern States had any grievance, they had a remedy in a change of the Constitution. We deny it. They wanted no change in the Constitution. All they wanted was that the Constitution should be respected.

We were told that in America they do not grant the

elective franchise to a class, but give it to all, of every class and colour. This is untrue. Neither negroes nor Indians have the elective franchise in America. In some States negroes may be allowed to vote on local questions, but in no State are they placed on a level with the whites with regard to the franchise. Nor are Indians. Nor are new-comers from Europe. And the Know-nothings, who form a very large portion of the Republican or Lincolnite party, proposed to disfranchise all foreign-born citizens, and all Catholics, whether foreign-born or not; while others of them propose to disfranchise all but members of orthodox churches.

It is said no party to a contract has a right to withdraw from it without the consent of the other party. But that is not the question. The question is whether, when one party to a contract has broken it, and declared his determination to persist in breaking it, the other party is not absolved.

We are next told that the Southerners are seeking to destroy the best Government on the face of the earth. The statement is not true. Supposing the Washington Government to be the best in the world, which we are very far from believing, the Southerners have no desire to destroy it. All they want is, to be allowed to form a Government for themselves, leaving the Government of the North untouched. Just as it is with Poland. The Poles have no desire to destroy the Government of Russia, but simply to withdraw from under its yoke, and form a Government of their own.

We are next told that the South seceded solely on the ground of slavery: that they said not a word about tariffs. We answer, if the Southerners did not complain about tariffs, it was not because they had no reason to complain; but because they were disposed to make great concessions for the sake of peace. But when their enemies declared their determination to trample on every right they had, they could endure no longer. And this was what they did when they undertook to shut them out of the territories, and encouraged men to invade their soil for the purpose of causing a servile insurrection.

It is said the Northerners treat the negroes as their equals. This is another great untruth. They do not treat them as their equals in any respect. They do not admit

them into their common schools or colleges. They do not treat them as their equals in railway carriages, omnibuses, or steamboats. They do not treat them as their equals in the army or the navy, in the church or in the theatre, in the streets or in the courts. The Republicans themselves do not treat them as their equals. Mr. Lincoln does not. The State from which he comes does not. It refuses them a home or an asylum on its soil. Mr. Lincoln himself advises them to leave the country. The whole Republican party declared they had neither the intention nor the wish to give them liberty.

The Southerners are said to have commenced the war; but this too is contrary to the truth. The war was begun when the Republicans declared their determination to trample on the rights of the South. It was begun in a more glaring form when John Brown invaded Virginia, and was applauded by the Abolitionists and Republicans. Even at Fort Sumpter the North were the first to break the peace, though not the first to fire a shot. It was their attempt to re-enforce the Fort that compelled the Southerners to take it. But the parties chargeable with the guilt of a war are not those who strike the first blow, but those who render the first blow necessary. If a man were to rob us, and declare his attempt to rob us again the moment he got us in his power, we should strike a dozen blows rather than allow ourselves to fall into his hands. When you are met on the highway and ordered to deliver, you have a right either to strike or secede; and if you should allow the robber to strike first, you would be much to blame.

The Southerners stole the property of the North, it is said. We ask for proof? The property of the country was common property. One-third of it at least belonged to the South. Did the South get more than one-third? We question whether they got one-sixth. The Southerners proposed negotiations with a view to a peaceful and an equitable settlement; but the Republicans refused to treat. If therefore the property was not fairly divided, the blame must fall on the Republicans.

It was said the Fugitive Slave Law originated with Mr. Mason. It is a mistake. The United States had a Fugitive Slave Law from the first. The Constitution itself required the surrender of fugitives. Mr. Mason only proposed and carried a modification of the law.



We are told that the men who framed the Constitution excluded slavery from the territory then in possession of the United States. We answer, the facts of the case are these. The Southerners were so generous as both to give their unpeopled lands to the nation at large, and to propose that slavery should be excluded from those lands for ever. And slavery *has* been excluded from them. The ancient territory has all been appropriated by the North, and made into free States. All this is creditable to the Southerners. The present territories of the United States are new territories, bought from France, with the joint money of the North and South. It was slave territory from the first. And France sold the territories to the United States on this condition, that the settlers should never be deprived of their property or their previous rights. The Southerners, however, agreed to a compromise, called the Missouri Compromise, shutting out slavery and slaveholders from the whole of the Territories North of  $36\frac{1}{2}$  degrees; and the unjust Republicans pledged themselves to rob the Southerners of the remainder.

The claim of the Southerners to carry their slaves into the territory was a new claim, we are told. Whereas the parties who made the new claim were the Republicans, who claimed to shut the Southerners out of their own unoccupied lands.

We were asked, Why do we not get cotton? And the answer was, The South will not send it. The answer is ridiculous. The South will be most glad to send it, if permitted to do so on honourable terms. Why should they wish to detain it if they could exchange it either for money or the goods they want? It is the Government of Washington that keeps back the cotton. And now the Republicans are proposing to stop the supply of food from America as well as of cotton.

The Fathers expected that slavery would die out, said Mr. Dennison. Very true. And it might have died out peaceably if the Republicans had respected the rights of the States. It *did* die out in several of the States. It was dying out in others. By violating the Constitution they have probably lengthened its life.

We are told that, so far from allowing secession, the Constitution did not even allow the separate States to coin money, &c. We answer, The Constitution might forbid

the States to coin money while in the Union, and yet not forbid the States to secede.

The Congress has exclusive jurisdiction over the territories, we are told. Whereas the organised territories, like Nebraska, elect their own Legislatures, and make their own laws: and no power has a right to dispose of the territories contrary to the Constitution.

The Northern States have always been against slavery, we are told, only they never had a majority in Congress till lately. The truth is, the Northern States have had a majority from the first. When they seceded from England there were *nine* Northern States, and only *four* Southern ones, so that the North had a majority of over two to one; a far greater majority than it had when the South seceded.

The North will give us cotton in eight weeks, said Mr. Dennison. The eight weeks are past, and the cotton has not come. We cannot rely upon Republican prophecies. We have seen too many of them falsified.

The Republicans have emancipated 300,000 slaves. Mr. Dennison says. But have they improved their condition? Have they made them more useful or more happy? They have done the contrary. And think of the cost at which they have effected the unhappy change. For every negro taken from his master, they have shed the blood of three white men. They have wasted untold millions of money. They have made large tracts of their prosperous country a frightful desolation. They have made the wives of their soldiers widows, and their children fatherless. They have demoralised their armies and dishonoured the nation. They have annihilated the liberties of the people, and established both in North and South a reign of terror. They have injured the nations of Europe, and reduced vast multitudes of industrious men and their helpless, unoffending families, to dependence on charity. And every day fresh victims are sacrificed. And every mail brings tales of fresh calamities and horrors. Bad as slavery is, this wicked war has caused more crime, more want, more horrid deaths, more suffering, in two short years, a thousand times over, than Southern slavery has caused during the whole two centuries of its existence.